

AMENDMENTS

In the Claims

The following is a marked-up version of the claims with the language that is underlined (“ ”) being added and the language that contains strikethrough (“ ”) being deleted:

1. (Currently Amended) A pelleted thermoplastic composite, comprising:
a matrix of recycled thermoplastic comprising at least one of the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, nylon, PET and styrene-butadiene rubber; and
a plurality of high-modulus reinforcing fibers, said reinforcing fibers comprising at least one of the group consisting of glass fibers, natural fibers, carbon fibers, and aramid fibers, each of said reinforcing fibers having a minimum modulus of one million psi and a length of at least approximately 0.5 inches after combining said recycled thermoplastic with said reinforcing fibers; said matrix of thermoplastic and said reinforcing fibers forming a shaped article pellets.
2. (Currently Amended) The pelleted thermoplastic composite of claim 1, wherein said thermoplastic is derived from carpet and said reinforcing fibers comprise glass fibers in a weight percentage of about 20% to 70%.
3. (Currently Amended) The pelleted thermoplastic composite of claim 1, wherein said thermoplastic contains at least some amount of non-recycled material.
4. (Currently Amended) The pelleted thermoplastic composite of claim 1, wherein said natural fibers comprise at least one of the group consisting of cotton, kenaf, sisal and hemp fibers.

5. (Currently Amended) The ~~pelleted~~ thermoplastic composite of claim 1, wherein said thermoplastic composite is a substantially homogeneous combination of thermoplastic and reinforcing fibers, such that said reinforcing fibers are completely wet out.
6. (Currently Amended) The ~~pelleted~~ thermoplastic composite of claim 1, wherein said thermoplastic composite has said reinforcing fibers aligned substantially in a first direction.
7. (Canceled)
8. (Currently Amended) The ~~pelleted~~ thermoplastic composite of claim 6, wherein a width of each said ~~pellets~~ shaped article of thermoplastic composite is between 1/8 inch and 1/4 inch.
9. (Currently Amended) The ~~pelleted~~ thermoplastic composite of claim 1, wherein up to 10 percent by weight of said thermoplastic comprises an adhesion promoter for bonding said thermoplastic to said reinforcing fibers.
10. (Currently Amended) The ~~pelleted~~ thermoplastic composite of claim 9, wherein said adhesion promoter is a graft copolymer of maleic anhydride with polypropylene.

11. (Currently Amended) A method of forming a thermoplastic composite, comprising:
 - providing recycled thermoplastic comprising at least one of the group consisting of polyethylene, polypropylene, nylon, PET and styrene-butadiene rubber;
 - providing high-modulus reinforcing fibers;
 - combining said thermoplastic with said reinforcing fibers; and
 - extruding said thermoplastic and said reinforcing fibers through a die to form the thermoplastic composite, wherein said formed thermoplastic composite comprises high-modulus reinforcing fibers having a length of at least approximately 0.5 inches.
12. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, wherein the providing reinforcing fibers step comprises providing reinforcing fibers of a substantially continuous length.
13. (Canceled)
14. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the providing reinforcing fibers step comprises preheating said reinforcing fibers.
15. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the thermoplastic composite contains at least some amount of non-recycled material.
16. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the combining step comprises mixing said thermoplastic continuously with said reinforcing fibers, such that said reinforcing fibers are completely wet out by said thermoplastic.

17. (Original) The method of claim 16, wherein the combining step comprises mixing said thermoplastic continuously with said reinforcing fibers such that a resultant thermoplastic composite is substantially uniformly mixed.
18. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the extruding step comprises extruding said thermoplastic composite into a continuous composite bar; and further comprising cutting said composite bar to a desired length.
19. (Original) The method of claim 18, further comprising using at least a portion of said composite bar to manufacture at least one of a molded and a shaped product.
20. (Original) The method of claim 18, further comprising cutting said composite bar to a length of at least approximately 1/2 inch to form a product preform.
21. (Original) The method of claim 20, further comprising placing said product preform in a compression press and matched die mold; and forming a molded composite product from the product preform.
22. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein the extruding step comprises extruding said thermoplastic composite such that a width of-said composite bar is between approximately 1/8 inch and approximately 1/4 inch.

23. (Original) The method of claim 11, further comprising using the thermoplastic composite to manufacture at least one of a molded and a shaped product.

24. (Original) The method of claim 11, wherein the providing thermoplastic step comprises plasticating extrusion of said thermoplastic such that said thermoplastic is molten.

25. (Original) The method of claim 24, wherein the providing thermoplastic step comprises relatively high shear stress plasticating extrusion of said thermoplastic.

26. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 11, wherein the providing high-modulus reinforcing fibers step comprises providing reinforcing fibers that are configured to be a predetermined length of at least 1/2 inch ~~before~~ after combining said reinforcing fibers with said thermoplastic.

27. (Currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein the combining said thermoplastic and said reinforcing fibers step is accomplished in a single, low shear mixing extruder, such that breakage of reinforcing fibers during mixing with thermoplastic is reduced and the reinforcing fibers maintain a length of at least 0.5 inches.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein the thermoplastic is sufficiently plasticized in a relatively high shear extruder before combining with said reinforcing fibers in said low shear mixing extruder.

29. (Currently amended) The method of claim 11, wherein the combining said thermoplastic and said reinforcing fibers step is accomplished in a two-stage extruder having a high shear zone, wherein the thermoplastic is plasticized, and a low shear zone, wherein the reinforcing fibers are added and mixed with said thermoplastic in said low shear zone to maintain the reinforcing fiber length of at least approximately 0.5 inches.

30. (New) A thermoplastic composite, comprising:

a matrix of recycled thermoplastic; and
a plurality of high-modulus reinforcing fibers having a length of at least approximately 0.5 inches after combining said recycled thermoplastic with said plurality of high-modulus reinforcing fibers.

31. (New) A method of forming a thermoplastic composite, comprising:

combining recycled thermoplastic with high-modulus reinforcing fibers to form said thermoplastic composite, wherein said formed thermoplastic composite comprises high-modulus reinforcing fibers having a length of at least approximately 0.5 inches.